

Appropriations Committee
February 15, 2017

Testimony of Drew Weyman
2nd Year Student, UConn School of Dental Medicine

Re: UConn Health Budget

Good evening,

Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the committee, I am Drew Weyman, a second year Dental Student at the University of Connecticut Health Center. I am a resident of Newington, CT and I have lived in Connecticut for the entirety of my educational career. I have been in and around the UCONN Health Center ever since I was a child and my father has been associated with the University of Connecticut for over 10 years. Whether it be UCONN undergrad, sports, and now the Health Center, UConn always was and always will be considered a part of my "Home."

I would like to begin with a genuine thank you for the incredible and continuous support that you have given to UConn Health -- from the state investments in the Health Center, to the current construction and upgrades that the Hospital and teaching facilities are getting. You have helped make it a great university that is key in shaping the minds of the ever changing field of medicine. I understand the challenges that you are faced with in balancing the State budget and frankly they are daunting. These times prove to be difficult when trying to allocate funds to various programs but I implore you to do everything possible to minimize the potential cuts to UConn Health.

Deep cuts would reverse the progress made at UConn Health and I fear that they will negatively impact the future of medicine and dentistry in our State. As of now the Health Center is a pillar of education in the fields of dentistry and medicine respectively. It is counterintuitive to cut funds to an institution that prides itself on providing exemplary health care, molding the minds of the future Doctors and Dentists in our State, and producing exceptional research which could someday change the way we look at these two fields altogether. Particularly after making such generous investments in UConn Health, why would we now want to start to go backwards?

When applying to Dental Schools, UConn always ranked high amongst my choices. This was because it was a "public" institution, whose role was to dutifully serve the wonderful people of Connecticut. Now as a student here I feel strongly that the state should continue to support UConn Health, since reducing funding would take away from the people of Connecticut by reducing access to care and potentially harming quality. Even now, thinking about what UConn has been able to do to for me I am grateful, for providing me a stipend to do research and for providing me the opportunity to go to San Francisco to speak about new methods of diagnosing facial pathologies. For the upcoming classes of medical and dental schools students, with these cuts they could go without these great opportunities that could hinder their networking and potential future career endeavors. That would take away from the beauty of what the Health Center has to offer us students.

I am very concerned that cuts to UConn Health will be very harmful to not only my education and research opportunities, but to all of the students to come after me. These programs are critical to making sure that UConn Health can continue to play the important role that it does in contributing to a strong Connecticut in the future.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening and for your ongoing support of UConn Health. I urge you to find a way to minimize cuts so that UConn Health can continue to provide the important benefits to our students and patients and to Connecticut's economy. To help all of the students and future students like me who want to experience as much of UConn as they can while attending this great institution.